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THE FRENCH CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE FLN

Constantin Melnik

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MEMORANDUM
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THE FRENCH CAMPAIGN
AGAINST THE FLN
Constantin Melnik

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PREFACE

This Memorandum is one of a series of studies on problems of counterinsurgency undertaken by The RAND Corporation for the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs). The consultant who undertook this work is a French citizen, was highly placed in the French Government during the crucial years leading up to France's disengagement from Algeria, and still resides in France.

The pressure of other work has prevented the author from undertaking the full study he had originally planned, but the information he has made available on the military offensive against the National Liberation Front (FLN) makes possible a separate publication at this time. In the interest of retaining the author's special perspective on events in Algeria, editing has been kept at a minimum.

SUMMARY

The overall strategy of General de Gaulle's operations against the Moslem insurgents (FLN) in Algeria between May 1958 and November 1960 had a twofold purpose. Its military goal was first to neutralize and then to destroy the insurrectional apparatus: guerrilla bands, terrorist cells, administrative organizations. Its political goal was to gain the support of the Moslem populace through considerations of economic, political, and social rehabilitation.

The French Army, though still smarting from its humiliations in Indochina and obsessively believing that it had been betrayed in Paris, yet had good reasons to be confident. Its contingent in Africa had already done well in the three earlier "battles" -- of Algiers, of the Frontiers, of the Sahara. By May 1958 it was well-equipped, brilliantly officered, and again under the leadership of General de Gaulle.

Contrary to some opinions, the Army had not devised a new and radical theory for fighting revolutionary wars. The unconventional tactics that General Challe used so successfully were often due to on-the-spot improvisations and to some of the lessons learned in Indochina. Of special note are the following: 1) Quadrillage -- a method of deploying troops on a grid-like pattern throughout a populated area. 2) Specialized assault forces that could be called in to wipe out the insurrectionists once they had been sealed off. 3) Specialized commando troops (often largely Moslem) using against the FLN the latter's

own strategems. 4) Such special forces as the DOP's for detecting and destroying insurgent networks -- police action of a sort but unhampered by legal niceties.

That the population was sown with dissident elements posed special difficulties in conducting the counterinsurgency. However much the French command wanted, not just to neutralize the populace, but even to win its support, the methods employed had to be swift and terrible enough to uproot and demoralize the enemy, but not at the cost of driving the civilian population further into the guerrilla camp.

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I. INTRODUCTION

General de Gaulle's operation in Algeria had two phases: During a period of about two and a half years (from de Gaulle's return to power, resulting from the coup d'état of 13 May 1958, until the end of 1960) France led a large-scale politico-military offensive against the FLN Moslem insurgency. Towards the end of 1960, General de Gaulle strongly modified his strategic objectives and instituted a policy of French disengagement from Algeria, which lasted about 15 months and ended with the signing of the Evian agreements with the FLN on 19 March 1962. During this second phase, France had to carry on three struggles simultaneously: the effort toward disengagement and the combat against the Moslem insurgents had to be combined with the fight against various attempts at insurrection by the European population of Algeria -- in particular, the OAS uprising -- provoked by the policy of entente with the Moslem rebels.

The study of the offensive launched against the FLN after 13 May 1958 (which attained its full importance with the seating of the Debré government on 9 January 1959) has a threefold interest.

The military operations of this offensive were carried out by an army which believed, after its defeat in Indochina, that it had found in the theory of "revolutionary warfare" certain methods and techniques capable of putting down an insurrection. The successes and limitations of the action undertaken, the consequences of and reasons for these successes and these limits should

then be weighed with care by all those interested in the worth of this theory.

The overall concept of this campaign, as well as the execution of its political counterpart, are attributable to General de Gaulle himself. This fact gives France's counterinsurgency operation in Algeria a certain singularity. An analysis of the operation is not absolutely necessary for a theoretical knowledge of the counterinsurgency phenomenon, but it is useful for an understanding of what happened in Algeria and for a better appreciation for the personal political style of the French Chief of State.

Finally, the French offensive -- its unfolding, its successes and its limitations -- constituted the take-off point from which General de Gaulle believed it necessary to embark on (and was able to carry out) his policy of disengagement.

Although the French offensive in Algeria from May 1958 to November 1960 is a historical fact, its real significance is still much debated in France. The extreme-right opponents of General de Gaulle, in particular, his military opponents, go so far as to state that the Army could have gained or was on the point of gaining a kind of military victory. The adherents of this thesis accuse General de Gaulle of having sabotaged this victory by a policy of weakness, either because he lacked comprehension of the basic principles of "revolutionary warfare," or because he deliberately willed to "abandon" Algeria.

On the other hand, the supporters of a rapid negotiation with the FLN proclaim that General de Gaulle wasted

his time for more than two years, principally in deference to the forces that carried him to power on 13 May 1958. In this perspective, the French counterinsurgency in Algeria bore no fruit -- except that of complicating the problem still further and exacerbating the feelings of the Moslems as well as those of the Europeans.

However radically they differed in their evaluation of the results obtained from the campaign against the FLN, the two groups agreed in their evaluation of the motivation of General de Gaulle: the Chief of State had desired to neutralize opposition to his policy by hiding his true intentions and by engaging the Army in operational tasks which would cut it off from European activism.

If historical perspective shows that the truth lies between these two categorical and simplified views, it still remains that the disparity which they evidence in regard to the Algerian war calls for a very careful analysis. Consequently, let us first attempt to reconstruct the offensive against the FLN as it was or at least as the author saw it as a staff officer of Michel Debré.

II. THE STRATEGIC CONCEPT

Although it has never been officially formulated in this way, the strategic concept of the French offensive launched against the Moslem uprising after General de Gaulle's return to power was to seize the Moslem insurgents in a politico-military pincer action.

The military branch of the pincer movement had as its mission to render the existence of an armed insurgency on Algerian soil an impossibility. On the defensive side, this involved preventing armed insurgent groups from carrying on paramilitary operations. On the offensive side, it involved destroying every insurrectional organization, whether guerrilla bands in the countryside, groups of terrorists in the urban areas, or support organizations ("OPA": Politico-administrative organizations). This destruction of insurgent organizations was not considered an end in itself but was intended to exert a triple terrent force: (1) to convince the fighters on Algerian soil that their struggle was impossible and that they had no other alternative than to lay down their arms; (2) to demonstrate to the Moslem population that despite the claims of the insurgents, recourse to violence was realistically infeasible because of the efficiency of the French Army; and (3) to convince the political leaders of the rebellion stationed on foreign territory that it was impossible to pursue an armed revolt against France.

The political branch of the pincer movement was intended to demonstrate that insurrection against France, rendered impossible by the success of the French Army,

was useless as well. To that end, three steps were taken to satisfy the hopes of the people. First, France pledged a vast plan for the economic and social transformation of Algeria. Secondly, France planned to revitalize Algerian political life by holding a series of elections designed to make a free expression of the people's will increasingly possible. Finally, to crown this edifice, General de Gaulle solemnly guaranteed that the Algerians would be given self-determination and that the future of their country lay in an "Algerian" Algeria and in cooperation with France.

The working of this double pincers (the military proving the impossibility of insurrection, the political demonstrating its uselessness) presents dual characteristics. In the first place, its effects were aimed simultaneously at the general population and the insurgents. In the second place, it is clear that the principal effort was directed against the insurrection itself (its domestic fighters and its foreign leaders). On the one hand, it was the insurgents who felt most of the effects of the French offensive: they were subjected directly to military attack, while the general population felt only indirect psychological repercussions. Under the political plan, it was certainly the populace which became the direct object of the French effort, but only with the democratic means of persuasion, which were devoid of any sense of personal coercion. On the other hand, and above all, General de Gaulle stated publicly that it was on the side of the insurgents that his politico-military offensive should bear fruit. To the Algerian fighters, he

offered (rather than continue an impossible and useless battle) the "peace of the brave," in which the laying down of arms would be matched by a total amnesty. To the leaders outside of Algeria, he repeatedly renewed his proposal to discuss details of a military settlement at the cessation of hostilities. To both he guaranteed, in exchange for the halt of armed conflict, a share in the Algerian future which he had promised to build.

To achieve this politico-military encirclement of the rebellion, the French government relied upon three principal trump cards:

First, the coup d'état of 13 May had endowed General de Gaulle with the two fundamental virtues which, in his eyes, were indispensable for carrying through -- and imposing -- a policy: authority and a sense of continuity. Authority, because General de Gaulle was given carte blanche by the population of metropolitan France to settle the Algerian problem, and he did not foresee that his policy might be seriously harmed by the European activists for Algeria, and even less so by the Army. Continuity, because the new constitution of the Fifth Republic guaranteed the stability of the government.

In the second place, the French government believed itself able to rely on the paramount argument of force. Moreover, in the French view it was not a matter of brute force, but an "enlightened" force capable of putting an end to the problem of insurgency. The French Army considered, in fact, that it had at its disposal both the

tactical capabilities to destroy the FLN and efficient methods of "psychological warfare" for use against the Moslem population. The proximity to the scene of operations, the numerical weakness of the opponent, techniques of guerrilla warfare, the experience gained in Indochina and Algeria -- such were the elements which convinced the Army that the FLN insurgency was doomed. According to the military men, only the political chaos of the Fourth Republic could prevent the triumph of the French Army. For this reason, the Army took part in the coup d'état of 13 May and worked for General de Gaulle's return to power. Encouraged by the results, the Army seemed ready to give its best.

The last French trump card was the personal prestige of General de Gaulle. The new Chief of State attributed great tactical value to what he himself called "the Gaullist phenomenon." His status as "savior of France" gave "the man of June 18" the impression that his personal influence was able to gain the trust and adherence of the masses. The Gaullists -- headed by the General -- did not confine the effects of this magical power to metropolitan France: for them, de Gaulle was also "the man of Brazzaville," the sincerity of whose liberal and anticolonial views would be felt by the peoples of the former French colonial possessions. From this point of view, General de Gaulle's prestige among the Moslem population was an important factor in the Algerian situation.

Certain comments should be made at this point, however, since they will permit a better understanding of the development of the French offensive in 1959 and 1960.

In the first place, one should point out that the strategic concept which we are trying to schematize covered a far more simple reality. Basically, the French government decided, in carrying out its offensive against the FLN, to put to work all the means of action at its command. The Army would carry on the war. The civil administration would launch social, economic, and political reforms. General de Gaulle would employ his prestige as much to define the purposes of the French war in Algeria as to put an end to the conflict. The manner in which the Chief of State went about this task is, moreover, typical of the French determination to seize all the possibilities which are offered: General de Gaulle would, at the same time, guarantee the course of action which he wanted for Algeria, and send out appeals both to the Moslem population and to the local fighters and their overseas leaders.

One can meanwhile suppose that this French plan was not solely an attempt at rationalizing the use (a normal one despite its doubtfulness from a strategic viewpoint) of all the means at one's command. In fact, this decision to put everything into operation effected a compromise between the only two forces which existed in France, the Army and General de Gaulle. The Army accepted the mission which the Chief of State had given it, and hoped that its ground operations would have a decisive value. Through the destruction of the insurgent organizations but also through direct action against the population at large, the Army, as we shall see in detail, hoped to control the political branch of the pincers encircling the insurrection. General de Gaulle, on the contrary, thought

that the success achieved by the Army would augment his own freedom of action in regard to the insurrection, while diminishing the risks of a new military coup which this time might be directed against himself.

If the grand design of the French offensive was thus based on hidden motives (the only authority which attempted to reconcile and coordinate the actions of the two forces was the personal staff of the Prime Minister, Michel Debré), it is to be expected that it would also present analytical defects, theoretical contradictions, and somewhat naive expectations. But it is not on these grounds that such imperfections become obvious, since in insurgency as well as in conventional warfare, it is not the intentions that count but the results obtained in the hard school of reality.

III. THE FRENCH ARMY

To close the military arm of the counterinsurgency pincers, the French Army planned to take advantage as much of men and materiel as of experience and military doctrine.

Although the mountain community of Aurès, where the rebellion broke out in November 1954, had only six gendarmes for 60,000 inhabitants, and although reinforcements arrived in Algeria only progressively and by the disastrous method of "small packages" (effective military strength went from 50,000 men in November 1954 to 80,000 in February 1955 to 120,000 in August 1955, but reached 400,000 only in May 1956), the command had at its disposal, after 13 May 1958, a force of nearly a million men. If one considers that the insurgents never had an effective force of more than 50,000, the balance of forces was then in favor of the French Army by more than 20 to 1. (This evaluation does not take into the account other aspects of the situation: (1) considering the area which had to be controlled (340,000 sq. km. in Algeria aside from 2,000,000 sq. km. in the Sahara), one can calculate three men to each sq. km.; (2) in relation to the Moslem population (9,000,000) one can calculate one Frenchman to nine Algerians; (3) in comparing operational units one arrives at a figure of 2 to 1, because the French Army, in addition to their heavy maintenance service, were forced to assume a concentrated, static posture and all of its units did not have an adequate combat potential.)

In the same way, while the units stationed in Algeria in 1954 had only rudimentary and obsolete equipment, and

while the first reinforcements debarking in Algeria had overly heavy equipment (artillery, armored cars), the Army now had at its disposal a modern guerrilla warfare capability: engineering methods for erecting electrified barriers along the frontiers, a fleet of helicopters, light support aircraft, trucks, highly refined communication techniques, equipment for sea and aerial reconnaissance (the armored cars, heavy artillery, and the bombers were used only on a small scale in defense of the frontiers).

Finally, in a qualitative sense, one could say that the Algerian war had attracted the best elements of the French Army. The war in Indochina had been given over essentially to mercenaries at the enlisted level and often to marginal elements at the command level. Considered as a "lost war," it attracted many adventurers -- and a number of heroes among the young officers -- but it inspired a certain reserve on the part of the senior regular officers who did not belong to the colonial branch of the service (to take a single example, the very promising colonel of engineers, Antoine Argoud, preferred to test the "Javelot" brigade in Germany). The distance from the theatre of operations did not permit the Parisian General Staff to assume actual control of the action. So, having had their deficiencies brutally revealed by defeat, the entire corps of French officers and the command apparatus wished to take their revenge.

Thus, throughout all the echelons in Algeria one could find the flower of the French Army. The exceptional training officers, such as Colonel Jeanpierre (for the Foreign Legion) and Colonel Bigeard (for the parachute

troops) made their regiments into extraordinary assault troops, imbued with a veritable mystique of power and almost obsessed by the desire to erase the Indochina defeat. For example, the 1st Foreign Paratroop Regiment, during four months of 1959, disabled 1500 of the rebels, and seized 1200 weapons, of which 100 were automatic. Out of a force of 900 men, their losses were 100 dead and 300 wounded. Other outstanding soldiers took command of "sectors" where they dedicated themselves to destroying bands of insurgents and winning over the population. Officers known for their capabilities as theoreticians and organizers attacked the problem of "revolutionary war;" for example, Colonel Argoud became chief of staff for General Massu. In short, commands were given to the best and most experienced generals, the Army Corps of Algeria to General Massu, and the Army Corps of Constantine to General Olié, the future Chief of General Staff of the Army. In fact, a constant interaction took place between the Algerian command and the high command in Paris: the Chief of the General Staff, General Ely (later, General Olié and General Puget) personally followed the operational developments.

General de Gaulle confirmed this work in November 1958 by replacing General Salan, notable for his colonial origins and Indochinese experience, with General Challe. The choice of this dynamic, impetuous aviator as the leader of the French offensive symbolizes well the auspicious signs of renewal. More important than the quantitative and qualitative questions of effectiveness and methods was the morale problem. The Army considered that it

should win the war to wipe out the "shame of Indochina," and that it could do it.

It is impossible to analyze here the causes of the trauma left by the Indochina war, but one should note that before 13 May 1958, the Army felt it had already achieved considerable results which proved its efficiency.

After the guerrilla uprising in the wild mountain country of Aurès in November 1954, the Moslem insurgency had been able, until mid-1956, to extend the introduction of its paramilitary units and its politico-administrative organization throughout the country (the Constantine region undertook the relief of Aurès in the spring of 1955; the Kabylia mountains then became the focal point and a zonal refuge for the FLN, while the Oran region was contaminated from Morocco.) The arrival of French reinforcements in May 1956 put a stop to the spread of the maquis. The crops of summer 1956 could be harvested, and the safety of transportation routes was re-established. If the FLN could launch a "spring offensive" in 1957, they could not renew it in the fall. The number of their military actions fell from 4,000 in January 1957 to 1500 in December.

The insurgency was not, then, capable of spreading "corruption" and still less of passing to the stage found in certain types of insurgent developments (such as the Viet Minh in Indochina), which is the creation of an interior "sanctuary" where the insurgents could exercise their power and from which they could mount a conventional offensive designed to overthrow the established order.

Nevertheless, in order to obtain a decisive result, the insurgents built up an external "sanctuary" in

Tunisia and another in Morocco from which armaments and men flowed into Algerian territory (5,000 men in February 1957, 1200 weapons in March). In the "battle of the frontiers" which then took place, the Army countered with two responses: while a barrier sealed up the frontiers (the Tunisian barrier was 80 percent completed by the autumn of 1957), the French assault troops had applied themselves to annihilating the guerrilla bands coming from Tunisia. In February 1958, the FLN left behind in the frontier zone some 3,410 dead, 635 prisoners, 52 machine guns, 28 automatic rifles, 286 machine pistols, and 885 shotguns. By 13 May 1958, it could be considered that the victory of the "battle of the frontiers" was virtually in sight.

Still more important and significant to the Army was the victory which it believed it had gained in the "battle of Algiers." Not having been able to provoke a decisive "decoying" action by means of rural guerrillas, the FLN decided to engage in a test of strength in the capital of Algeria itself. With the aim of demoralizing the European population of Algiers and the Paris government, in order to impress both international opinion and the Moslem population, the insurgents planned to launch a decisive offensive by means of "blind terrorism" directed by their urban networks. From September 1956 to June 1957, bombs were exploded in public places: bars, stadiums, dance halls, motor coaches, and tram stops. The panic created on the part of the European population and the impotence of the police were such that the public authorities called on the Army to restore order. In three weeks,

the 10th Paratroop Division succeeded in dismantling the "bomb network" of the FLN, thanks to the boxing-off of the towns and the rapid use of information obtained through all possible means. In one week, a second network, reconstituted after these operations, was demolished in turn, its leaders arrested, and the political directors of the insurgency stationed in Algiers forced to flee to foreign countries.

Much less important, the "battle of the Sahara" permitted the paratroops, in the autumn of 1957, to put an end to the spreading insurrection in the desert.

Having then played a part in curbing the expansion of the insurgency and also of breaking three of its offensive efforts, the French Army consequently believed itself capable of mounting a counterattack. It believed in the possibility of regaining the terrain lost from November 1954 to May 1956 by mopping up the areas where conditions of terrain or ascendancy over the population had created zones of refuge (the mountains of Kabylia and of Aurès, the Hodna mountains, etc.) and by removing the insurgents from the entire territory.

In order to win this counteroffensive, the Army thought it could rely on the experience acquired in Indochina and Algeria.

In the first place, the successes in the "battle of the frontiers" and the "battle of Algiers" demonstrated to the Army that their combat techniques were capable of destroying the guerrilla bands and that they had also the necessary means of controlling (and subduing) the populace. From this last point of view, the attitude of the Moslem

masses during the coup d'état of 13 May seemed to confirm the lasting nature of the results gained during the "battle of Algiers": not only had the FLN been unable to carry on any offensive operation in the capital, but the entire Moslem population had also participated -- under the aegis of the Army -- in a widespread "fraternization" movement with the Europeans in order to celebrate the accession to power of General de Gaulle.

In the second place, according to military estimates, the menace represented by the Moslem FLN insurgency was not at all comparable in its extent to the Viet-Minh insurgency. On the one hand, the degree of "attrition" seemed, in May 1958, relatively reasonable. On the other hand, in the military plan, the combat potential of the "fellaghas" did not equal that of the "Viets." They were not masses on the move, but small groups of guerrillas and combat networks; not a product of Communist ideology or exacerbated nationalism, but a hope for independence and economic and social justice; not connected with a rigid ideological structure, but with groups of politico-administrative cells; not fanatic Asiatics but Arab "brigands." Finally, and above all, according to the political plan, it was a population which did not seem possessed by an inextinguishable hatred and one whose aspirations it seemed possible to satisfy.

According to the most often-stated appraisal, "20 percent of the population was on the side of the rebels, 20 percent on the French side, and 60 percent undecided." Several reasons made one ready to believe that it would be an easy task to win over the uncommitted group. Even

beyond the underestimation of the deep-seated causes of the insurrection (which is characteristic of the counter-insurgents who do not go to the heart of the matter out of fear of compromising their entire system of values) and of the overestimation of the impact of activist techniques on the populace (found among certain theorists of "revolutionary warfare"), one should note that a total appraisal of the Moslem temperament was deeply hindered by the particular situation in Algeria. For generations, the Moslems had lived in perfect harmony with the most important European colony to enhance the value of the country. The lack of a state or even a national structure prior to French colonization; the administrative fiction of Algeria as a set of "French departments;" the long series of frustrations encountered by Algerian nationalism (which had gone through nine postwar years of confusion, dissension, and impotence); the attachment of the rural masses to the traditional tribal system; the massive emigration of workers to France; the fraternization between the French and the Moslems during the two World Wars; and the Arab respect for power -- all seemed, on the one hand, to indicate the existence of special ties with France and, on the other hand, to facilitate French influence on the population.

Many commentators affirm, in this regard, that the confidence of the French Army derived, moreover, from the fact that it had worked out a theory of "revolutionary warfare." It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that most of the affirmations concerning the existence of such a theory are exaggerated.

Certainly a good number of officers had reflected on the defeat in Indochina, on the methods peculiar to insurgency, and thus on the possibilities of refashioning the art of war as it was then known to the Western powers. Numerous articles appeared on the subject (particularly in the Revue de la Defense Nationale) and courses of instruction had been taught (e.g., by Colonel Lacheroy).

Actually, it is premature to talk in terms of a true theory (analyses of phenomena being often imperfect and contradictory) and even less of an operational doctrine (in the sense in which the French military thinkers see a codification of principles as both inspiring the strategic concepts of the General Staff and the tactical operations of the ground forces). The only practical application systematically introduced into the French Army was, in effect, the creation of the "Fifth Bureaus," concerned on every level of the military structure with mounting propaganda actions against both the insurgent organizations and the general public. Otherwise (and even in connection with the precise mission of the Fifth Bureaus and their integration into a strategic overall politico-military scheme), discussion remained free and open. Carrying almost to the absurd the precept that it is necessary to confront the enemy with exactly the type of warfare which he himself is employing, certain military men, such as Colonel Gardes, saw a panacea in psychological warfare and in the infinite possibilities it offered for "conquering" the masses. Others, like Colonel Broizat, envisaged an "ideological" purification or, like Colonel Argoud, a "political" action making itself felt through

the entire nation. At any rate, these "doctrines" remained coherent only on paper, or in the minds of officers who were otherwise considered insignificant by the military apparatus.

It is nonetheless true that this debate over the "revolutionary war" had two important effects on the majority of the officers. In the first place, several primary truths concerning the particularity of the counter-insurgency action impressed them deeply. From top to bottom of the military hierarchy, it was already felt that the population was an essential factor, and that all action should be evaluated in terms of its psychological repercussions on the populace, etc. Instead of denying the problem, as was the case in Indochina, by taking refuge in staff planning, large-scale operations, or garrison life, the French military in Algeria at least faced reality. They attempted, each on his own level, to find practical solutions to the truths thus perceived.

The second consequence of the "theory" was more "revolutionary." In proportion to the lack of action on the part of the Government and the General Staff, a movement emerged to demand the application of radical methods of "conquest" against the populace (e.g., structuring, indoctrination, and breaking them up into cadres).^{*} This unsatisfied aspiration later gave birth to the belief in

^{*} A good resume of these "methods" (la structuration, l'endoctrinement, l'encadrement) is contained in the book of former paratroop colonel, Roger Trinquier, La Guerre Moderne, written after his resignation from the Army with the aim of showing that it was possible to win the Algerian war.

a "betrayal" on the part of the political powers, and enlisted most of the specialists concerned with "revolutionary warfare" in the European insurgency action of the OAS -- an event which is inexplicable without faith in the magical qualities of this theory.

The final element which influenced the morale of the Army after 13 May 1958 was derived from the political support which the Army believed itself to have obtained, both from the entire nation, and from the political forces which it had helped to put in power.

Among all the obsessions left by the Indochinese war (where mercenaries led by professional officers carried on a lost war which was of no concern to the French nation), the most powerful was that of being abandoned by the homeland. Now, the Algerian war seemed, to the Army, to constitute a long-awaited and long-desired opportunity to rebuild the heart of the French nation.* The proximity of the theatre of operations, located on the south coast of the Mediterranean, the general adherence of the French population to the belief that "Algeria is France" (also publicly voiced by the officials of the Fourth Republic) seemed to the Army a guarantee that the Indochinese drama would not be re-enacted. One fact which was crucial in the eyes of the Army tended to confirm this hope, and that was the military contingent already stationed in Algeria. The conditions were particularly reassuring. On the one hand, a special effort was

*This wish underlay the "sickness of the Army" in 1957-1958. (Looking at the underground publication Message des Forces Armées, one finds it to have been more powerful than the need for a theory of "revolutionary warfare.")

demanding from the draftees (in order to maintain the necessary military strength, enlistments were extended to thirty months). On the other hand, the French youth accepted their military duty with enthusiasm (the manifestations of hostility of May 1956 did not have any repercussions and were never repeated. The Army felt a particular satisfaction in seeing the young Communists participate unreservedly.)

If the obsession over abandonment by the French nation seemed almost obliterated, there remained the fear of being betrayed by the politicians, upon whom the Army had cast the responsibility for the Indochinese defeat. It was this fear of treason (before 13 May, there was much talk of a "diplomatic Dien-Bien-Phu") which explains why the Army did not crush the European demonstrations of May 13, why it headed the movement to demand a "government for public welfare," and finally prepared the invasion of Paris in order to bring about de Gaulle's return to power.

This last event gave immediate satisfaction to the Army, which was stirred into action after May 13 by the political victory which it had thus achieved. It counted on de Gaulle's gratitude and his upholding of the principles by which it had aided his return. Finally, it accorded to General de Gaulle the allegiance which it had refused to the leaders of the Fourth Republic. For the Army, de Gaulle was not only a military man but also the "savior of his country," the man of whom it could be said (as he himself said to his young officers) that "he had never abandoned anything." The choice of a supporter of May 13, as fierce a partisan of "French Algeria" as

Michel Debré for Prime Minister (responsible, as such, for the supreme command of military operations), and the immediate instigation of a politico-military offensive against the insurrection -- all seemed to indicate that the Army had grounds for confidence.

To be sure, feelings of anxiety persisted nevertheless. Some of General de Gaulle's decisions caused astonishment, such as dismissing certain architects of the May 13 policy, ordering the military to withdraw from the "Committees of Public Welfare," and offering the "peace of the brave" to the fellaghas. The political part of the counterinsurgency offensive gave particular rise to these reservations, but three factors contributed to sustain the morale of the Army. In the first place, the political orientation of the offensive was revealed progressively, and every criticism came into conflict with the personal prestige of General de Gaulle. In the second place, the Army admitted its political inexperience, and aside from certain marginal experts in "revolutionary warfare," it was relieved of the responsibility of submitting this aspect of the problem to the Chief of State. Finally, and above all, the Army hoped, as we have seen, to influence the decisions of General de Gaulle both by destroying the insurgent organizations and bands, and by winning over the Moslem population.

The "liberalism" imputed to General de Gaulle was then a kind of spur to morale, stirred up by the feeling that the Army had at its command the necessary human, material, and intellectual means to put down the insurrection.

IV. NEUTRALIZING THE INSURGENT FORCES

The manner in which the French Army approached its mission of neutralization and destruction of the insurgent paramilitary forces stemmed more from individual and collective experience acquired on the spot than from academic principles of conventional warfare or from any "doctrine" of "revolutionary warfare."

It is, in particular, this constant adaptation to the type of warfare carried on by the insurgents, this need to define, even to improvise, a response that takes account of the different aspects of a counterinsurgency action (whether they be technical or human, military or politico-psychological); it is this will to break through routines and to make all actions work toward a single goal that explains the determining role played in counterinsurgency by the personality, the dynamism, and the broad-mindedness of the leader -- and this is true for all the echelons of the armed forces and the civilian authorities.

Thus the results obtained during the French offensive in Algeria should be credited to the personality of the command-in-chief, General Maurice Challe. After his discharge in March 1960, his more orthodox successors, like Generals Crepin, Gambiez, and Ailleret, did not achieve the same results, although they made proper application of the military concepts which Challe had outlined. Not only did Challe make his mark on the French offensive, but he was also able to select subordinates who carried through the maximum number of command actions given to them. The choice of subordinate

commanders is more difficult than it seems, since, on the one hand, qualities essential in a counterinsurgency leader are not necessarily those of the orthodox military man, and, on the other hand, no criteria exist for defining the type of personality and the requisite abilities.*

It is also this partially intuitive aspect of the French action which obliges us, in order to grasp the underlying principles, to examine somewhat empirically the manner in which these missions were conducted.

The neutralization of the insurgent paramilitary forces appears, from a military point of view, as follows:

Viewed from a strictly defense angle, the problem was insoluble in practice. The number of objectives capable of being attacked by the insurgent forces (including assassinations, destruction of materiel, ambushes, or attacks on military detachments and installations) was practically limitless. This was so because they were selected not for strategic military reasons but to secure the maximum psychological effect with the minimum of risk. In principle, then, the insurgents would only attack -- in the initial phase of the insurrection -- when they could pit strength against weakness and especially when their influence on the populace would have gained them enough support to mount and carry on their attack.

* However, a boomerang effect was perhaps caused by this selection of strong personalities: innovating, impassioned, and dynamic. Their efforts had a tendency to cause rather disparate results. Above all, some of them did not hesitate, later, to turn against the Fifth Republic when they were convinced that General de Gaulle was following a policy which ignored their views.

The defensive reply lay, then, in the introduction of military forces in sufficient concentration to control the entire territory (a method which the French military men called "quadrillage": a grid or checkering action). But this troop deployment could not limit itself to the conventional concept of occupation of fixed points or communications routes. The Indochinese experience had shown that the insurgents could continue to operate within the framework of the grid until the time when they were in a position to capture the fixed positions, one by one. It was necessary that the troops be distributed evenly throughout the population in order (for defensive purposes) both to lessen the impact of the insurgency on the populace and to detect any movements of the insurgent forces. But even by spreading the counterinsurgency forces throughout the population, the quadrillage (if looked at from a defensive perspective) could not be a lasting solution. The insurgent bands would survive and maintain their physical and psychological pressure on the population. The "decay" would continue, and ambushes would be aimed at disabling the counterinsurgents in their fortified positions.

The single valid response lay, then, in the destruction by offensive operations of the insurgent organizations. Now this involved military difficulties because the insurgent forces had several trump cards: their extreme fluidity and mobility, their knowledge of the terrain, and their support by the population, which informed and hid them.

Two courses were then open. First, the operational techniques of the counterinsurgents should permit them to

block the dispersion of the insurgent bands (the French remembered the large scale operations in Indochina, which yielded only meagre results).

In the second place, appropriate actions should be capable of depriving the insurgents of their support by the population. Consequently the offensive could not be limited simply to armed bands, but should aim at the total destruction of all enemy politico-administrative organizations which were exerting pressure on the population. One returns here again to the need for quadrillage. Looked at from the offensive standpoint, it would not only furnish the basis on which offensive operations could be built, but it would also strive for the destruction of the insurgent support groups imbedded in the population.

Under these conditions -- and taking into account the criteria of military efficiency -- the French Army was led to three conclusions:

- 1) If the defensive quadrillage superimposed on the population could serve as an interim solution, the only final solution to the problem posed by the insurgent paramilitary forces lay in their destruction by offensive operations.
- 2) This offensive would aim at the total insurgent force, both the armed bands and the politico-administrative support organizations.
- 3) This effort, to be successful, should combine two complimentary approaches: the original concept of using offensive operations to destroy the armed bands, and a quadrillage with the same offensive objective of rooting out all the insurgent organizations dispersed throughout the populace.

The picture which we are trying to outline is based on a fact which impressed itself on all the officers in Algeria: the operational difficulties encountered by the counterinsurgency forces, and in contrast, the opportunities which benefited the insurgents, proceeding largely from the support given them by the populace.

The French Army envisioned the possibility of reversing the situation. If one assumed that the population might assist the counterinsurgents rather than the insurgents, such an offensive would present only minor technical obstacles. If the OPA members were immediately denounced to the quadrillage forces, their arrest would create no problem. If the location of the armed bands were disclosed to the Army command, and if the former were not warned of the counterinsurgents' intentions but on the contrary were led toward them, their destruction would raise only relatively simple questions of military performance. The reversal of the operational situation would then be such that the insurgent forces would encounter almost insurmountable difficulties in taking the offensive. Suddenly isolated and denounced by the populace -- even "immobilized" while awaiting the arrival of reinforcements -- the insurgents could only survive by digging themselves in. For the counterinsurgents, the formerly insoluble defense problem would become basically easy.

From these findings, the French military men drew two types of conclusions. The first postulated, according to a very broad plan, the necessity of the "conquest" of the populace and included "theoretical" reflections and hopes concerned with the idea of "revolutionary war."

The second recommended, on the basis of a more practical plan, the study of various operational objectives.

On the offensive side, the Army advocated the following measures. The buildup of an information network among the population appeared indispensable for denouncing the OPA members and communicating the movements of the armed bands. Recourse was had to native soldiers (harkis) to test combat and operational methods adapted to enemy territory.

On the defensive side, great hope was placed in the "self-defense" system, whereby each village was armed (and fortified) so that it could face alone, at least at first, an offensive operation by the insurgents. For some, this "self-defense" formula was only a military palliative, designed to increase the available strength and augment the offensive forces by making the local volunteers assume static defensive duties. For others, self-protection was the logical extension of the military offensive; once the armed bands had been hit severely and the OPA rooted out, action against the populace would become possible. After the military offensive (whose principal effort was directed against the insurgent paramilitary forces) had consolidated its position, the counterinsurgency could move on to a political offensive which could "conquer" the populace.

In fact, the exponents of this method maintained that in political action, as in military action, decisive results could be obtained only by an offensive campaign. To dissuade the populace from supporting the insurgents (and a fortiori from joining them) was, from this point

of view, an essentially defensive position. The offensive viewpoint consisted, then, in engaging the populace in the counterinsurgency struggle on the side of the established authority. Self-protection, a defensive measure according to the military plan, would also become part of the offensive measures (in the political area) which were necessary for victory. Certain French specialists on the General Staff in Algeria counted, in fact, on thus inciting a "dialectical" movement which would insure a decisive crushing of the insurgency. Success in destruction of the insurgent military forces would create the necessary conditions to enter into a political offensive against the populace. This political engagement would in turn facilitate military neutralization operations against the insurgents; the new victories achieved would increase the possibilities of "conquering" the populace, etc., etc.

In fact, the divergent points of view on self-protection (either as a military palliative or original method to control the population) fit into the even larger problem of influence on the populace. As we have seen, the Army did not have any actual doctrine, but it wished to put to work all the solutions which seemed practicable. Self-protection would be judged, in the final analysis, by its results.

It is also significant that the French Army understood that its military operations were not an end in themselves but were valuable for their psychological repercussions, both on the local fighters and the political leaders of the insurgency.

The matter of demoralizing the local insurgents adds various complications to the operational needs which we have reviewed.

The first consists of giving a specific character to the efficacy of the operations undertaken. Since this is a matter of demonstrating to the insurgents the impossibility of their struggle, there could be no such thing as a "phony war," a "breather," or a "stabilized front." Tactically, any offensive operation which yielded only meagre results (as was often the case in Indochina or at the beginning of the Algerian war) did not only waste time, but also demoralized the offensive forces, while reinforcing the morale of the insurgents and causing them to feel invincible. Strategically, two conditions had to be fulfilled. The insurgents had to be convinced that the offensive operations were not simply an isolated phenomenon but would continue until their final destruction (an event from which it would be impossible to hide until after the storm had passed). They also had to realize that the counterinsurgents could deprive them of the two trump cards on which they depended: their mobility and the support of the populace.

This feeling of an inexorable mesh of circumstances could be brought to bear on the individual combatant. Cut off from the populace, pursued by hardened troops, the insurgent would know that there was no possible loophole. To be interned as a prisoner for the rest of the war was a luxury that he could not expect from counterinsurgents, who were not confronted by large masses to be destroyed with military power, but by individuals who had to be

brought to terms. Despite all the hatreds aroused in the counterinsurgents by the atrocities which were a regular accompaniment of the insurrection, it was still not possible to proceed to a systematic execution of prisoners since then the enemy would have no alternative but a desperate struggle. The balance found by the French Army in this area consisted of extremely brutal combat tactics (usually confined to commando units), followed by on-the-spot executions of overly fanatic leaders, but also by immediate enlistment of any elements who were considered recoverable.

In the third place, the impact of the offense could be expanded by "psychological" means, such as parades or broadcasts giving results of military operations and announcing the intent to continue the offensive, air drops of photos of slaughtered leaders, statements (pamphlets and broadcasts) from won-over insurgents, and appeals to the combatants addressed by name. These would have appreciable consequences.

If the demoralization of the local combatants constituted a direct and immediate objective of the counterinsurgents, it was not the same for the political leaders of the insurgency, for whom demoralization could only be a long-term and indirect objective.

Protected in their Tunisian sanctuary, the political leaders of the FLN did not, in fact, directly suffer the results of the French offensive. This only affected them indirectly, in depriving them of their freedom of movement in Algeria.

Even when the political leaders of the insurgency had found themselves in Algeria, they preferred (after

the disaster of the "battle of Algiers") to flee to foreign countries rather than to capitulate or to face the death chosen by their followers. And even beyond the possibilities of prosecuting an external war, the political leaders possessed qualities which made them less vulnerable to a destruction of their morale than the local fighters. Having stronger passions, a more extensive range of action, and benefiting by the hospitality accorded to political émigrés, the overseas political leaders could not logically submit except in the last resort, and then only in the face of a demonstration of the absolute impossibility of all forms of insurgency.

On the other hand, from the French military viewpoint, the effects of the military counterinsurgency actions on the populace were a determining factor. Since the destruction of the insurgents had as its goal the raising of the general morale of the population, the French terminology eschewed the terms "conventional" and "repressive" operations in favor of the term "pacification" operations.

In the first place, "conventional" operations that would have satisfied orthodox officers were eliminated in favor of methods, already reviewed, that could not only destroy the insurgents as such but could also exert pressure on the populace. As the destruction of the insurgent forces tends to prove to the population that insurgency is optional (far from being obligatory, as the terrorist insurgents sought to convey), the offensive forces on the one hand were brought to bear on the totality of bands, networks, and political organizations of the insurrection,

and on the other hand had to prove their absolute efficacy. Since the offensive forces were aimed at dissuading the populace from joining the insurgency and at demonstrating that it was impossible, the same criteria of definitive and total efficacy applied.

To ensure the protection of the population, the counterinsurgency forces should, in fact, completely eliminate all insurgent instruments of persuasion through violence, indoctrination, and "encadrement." Tactically, if a given operation (as correct as possible in its conventional deployment) is "dismantled" after only partial results, it will leave the population in the hands of the insurgents and provide the insurgents with an aura of invincibility. Strategically, even if security were re-established following successful operations, the effects of the renewed protection and the demonstration of the impossibility of insurgency would be lessened if the populace felt that the insurrection could continue elsewhere, could recur, or express itself in new and unexpected ways.

Now, these considerations do not apply solely to the conduct of military operations but also, as the proponents of "psychological warfare" discovered, to their use for propaganda purposes. A propaganda effort based prematurely on "re-established security," or "an overthrown rebellion," at a time when the insurgents could still commit acts of violence (such as the massacre of an isolated village like the Saharan town of Melouza in 1957) or military actions (such as the spectacular ambush of Palestro in 1958, where 28 French infantrymen died) could have disastrous results.

In the area of the insurgency itself, and even more so where the protection of the population was concerned, only results mattered. Even though "psychological warfare" could augment results, it could not be a substitute for them.

In the second place, the so-called "repressive" operations were distinguished from the "conventional" operations so as to dissuade the populace from joining the insurrection and to enlist them on the offensive side. Under these conditions, violence could be carried out against the insurgent forces and against them alone. In no case, should violence be applied against the entire population, or even a part of it (except in isolated cases where an entire group of population is an integral part of the insurgent combat force).

For the same reasons, the counterinsurgency operations against the armed bands and the networks or control groups in the population could not be permitted to have unfortunate side effects (extortion, brutality, etc.) on the general public. Moreover, the Army had to prove through positive actions (medical aid, social work, supplying food) that it was not the enemy of the people.

If this question of choosing between the insurgents and the population raised serious operational questions (the troops often had a tendency to conduct themselves as in conquered territory, and at worst would consider the local population responsible for the often provocative acts of the elusive insurgents), the fate reserved for fighters captured with arms gave rise to even more complex problems. If it was a simple matter to recommend public

execution for insurgents as an "example," it was more difficult to regulate behavior in regard to prisoners. An overly harsh policy would create martyrs; an overly indulgent policy weaken the idea of the impossibility of insurgency; and public democratic processes would permit the display of proclamations of faith. The 1956 capture of Ben Bella and four other "historic leaders" (after the interception of the aircraft which was taking them to Morocco), and that of the terrorist leader, Yacef Saadi, at the conclusion of the "battle of Algiers," caused France more psychological harm than the advantages accruing from these arrests. In the course of their offensive, the Army then adopted the solution which we have mentioned: no public executions, but bodies were deliberately left unburied to heighten their dissuasive effect, and after very brutal combat engagements or unwitnessed executions which simulated death in battle, no prisoners would be taken except those who had been "won over." On the contrary, as we shall see, the problems of political leaders, or of insurgents arrested in large towns in front of witnesses, remained without a solution.

V. DESTROYING THE INSURGENT FORCES

The "Challe Plan," named after the Commander in Chief appointed in November 1958, and symbolizing the military offensive launched by the French army, was known principally for its large operations intended to clear the mountainous zones where the insurrectional bands had previously found shelter.

In fact, this plan encompassed all the operational procedures aimed at fulfilling the "pacification" objectives just defined above. Challe's large operations were only one part of an ensemble. The two other parts were, on the military level, the isolation of the Algerian territory by the tight sealing of the frontiers and control of the territory by densely placed links of quadrillage and, on the population level, arrival at a system of "self-protection."

To destroy the insurrectional bands, which had the advantage of being fluid and mobile, the French General Staff relied on operational procedures intended to restrict the bands to a territory where they could be destroyed while cutting them off from the population. To this end, it combined several aspects once considered contradictory: extreme mobility of forces with deep deployment of troops; great maneuveral flexibility with solid strength; continuous adjustment to the incessant migration of the rebels, while maintaining constant respect for the pacification objectives; lightning operations against the bands with in-depth influence on the population.

The very originality of the Challe Plan thus lay in the distribution of his forces into two large specialized masses: the so-called quadrillage forces, specializing in deployment, and the so-called "intervention" forces, specializing in ultra-rapid and ultra-powerful action. General Challe designated the "General Reserves" for this purpose. They were composed essentially of shock troops of paratroopers and of the Foreign Legion. As of December 31, 1960, the quadrillage forces consisted of 213 battalions (three of which were deployed in the large cities), while the intervention forces consisted of 51 battalions (two paratrooper divisions: the 10th and the 25th DP formed by five regiments of paratroopers, one cavalry regiment, and one artillery group; one division of the Foreign Legion; the 11th DI formed by three regiments of the Legion and one artillery group; two regiments of Algerian riflemen and 13 commandos). Moreover, 47 battalions secured the protection of the frontier barrages.

For maximum adaptation of these forces to the nature of the insurrectional threat, General Challe combined in one organization command a knowledge of local positions with the general views necessary to the conduct of the war. The basis of the system was the sector, based on the civil district and generally entrusted to a superior officer with the rank of colonel. The only person militarily responsible for his territory, the sector commander had his own means at his disposal (the "sector troops," principally in charge of quadrillage and of minor interventions) but he could also obtain the services of the intervention forces. This elementary unit, the sector,

was inserted in a hierarchy including zones (based on the civil county) which were themselves dependencies of the three large army corps that covered the three large key regions of Algeria (Constantine, Algiers, and Oran). The conduct of the war was established and the use of the intervention forces was decided at the level of these commands; the highest-level decisions concerning the implementation of the doctrine and the use of the "General Reserves" were reserved for the Commander in Chief.

The sealing of the frontiers was the first military element of the Challe Plan. It aimed at "restricting" the military insurrectional forces to Algerian territory by preventing them from seeking shelter in the "external sanctuaries" adjacent to Algeria. It also made it impossible for additional forces and new weapons to infiltrate into Algeria.

The sealing of the frontiers was all the more important since the FLN, owing to the difficulties encountered since 1956 in enlarging its maquis, had succeeded in forming two actual armies in Tunisia and in Morocco (with strengths of 25,000 and 15,000 men, respectively). Now the Indochina experience had proven that it was practically impossible to fight an insurrection having an open frontier and the support of the populace.

This problem, the stopping of the continuous renewal of the enemy combat force and its "restriction" to a territory where it could be destroyed, was solved in a militarily satisfactory manner. Whereas in 1956, strong bands (several companies) were managing to enter Algeria and required fierce fighting in order to be subdued,

after the completion of the barriers in 1956, and the perfecting of their warning and defense system, no large-scale crossing occurred. Of the "katibas" that attempted to cross in the first months of 1959, up to 95-100 percent were destroyed. When the FLN launched a large-scale operation in November 1959 against the barrier to rescue the inland "wilayas" at grips with the offensive operations of the Challe Plan, 950 of the 1200 men involved turned back before the first barrier and only 10 crossed the rear barrier. In view of the fruitlessness of their efforts and the demoralizing effects on the fighting men as well as on the population, the FLN gave up any further attempt, limiting frontier crossings to a trickle of small groups or individuals. During the last semester of 1960, only 40 men and 40 rifles managed to enter Algeria.

Actually, the system which permitted such results was based less on conventional techniques (a fortification system would have been too costly in men and in equipment and actually not very efficient against small group infiltrations) than on an adaptation to the nature of the enemy actions. The French "barrage" functioned both as an obstacle (mines, barbed wire, constant illumination, patrols between fixed points, etc.) and as a warning system (the gate being electrified) allowing the intervention troops stationed inland to step into action. Crossing the barrier was therefore possible, but it was immediately detected and an organized group had no chance of escaping the troops specialized in the annihilation of armed bands.

Of course, such a barrier could not have seriously hindered a mass crossing of the entire enemy combat force.

However, this eventuality did not seem very probable, because the FLN could not run the risk of an annihilation of its external combat force in a showdown, or very dangerous because of the French superiority in men and equipment. The very nature of the barrier was, on the contrary, perfectly adapted to the most probable and dangerous nature of the enemy threat: the possibility of a constant revitalizing of the maquis by the crossing of strong-armed bands into Algeria. Furthermore, the very simplicity of the system employed made it possible to lay this type of barrier over long distances (320 km for the eastern barrier) and over any terrain (even wooded or mountainous). However, 40,000 men were required to man the Tunisian barrier (and 2500 to maintain it).

A last but important aspect of the tight sealing of the frontiers consisted of blocking the flow of weapons for the insurrection; thus the French navy exerted very strict control over Algerian waters.

Without entering into details, we must note that 1) the volume of weapons seized by the navy was greater than that seized in combat in Algeria itself. In April of 1959 the boarding of the Czechoslovakian cargo ship "Lidice," "officially" loaded with weapons for the Moroccan army, permitted the seizure of more than 2000 machine guns and 12,000 rifles. 2) The Special Services played a decisive role in providing information and disrupting the traffic. 3) The disruption of the weapon flow to the FLN in Western Europe was followed, however, by weapon supplies from satellite countries. The "escalation" was completed when, following several successful

boardings of satellite ships, the USSR, near the end of the war, secured the transportation herself. (China never sent anything but medicine and food.)

Simultaneously, the police and the customs services were monitoring the railways and roads leading to Algeria (the tight seal affected by the barriers forced the FLN to smuggle its weapons either in "small packages" hidden in railroad cars or trucks, or by caravans in the South Sahara where there was no barrier), and aerial surveillance of Algerian territory was carried out, although the FLN never had any aircraft at its disposal, even at its rear bases in Morocco, Tunisia, and Libya.

The second element of the Challe Plan -- the quadrillage -- from an "offense" point of view was not a simple mission which depended mostly on technical equipment, as in the protection of the frontier. Instead it fulfilled a multitude of functions whose successful performance depended largely upon the personal qualities of the responsible individuals charged with these functions.

As we have seen, the "pacification quadrillage" not only must hold fixed points of strategic importance and communication lines, but it must also, as a primary mission, ensure the protection of the population. To this end, it is a matter -- on the defense level -- of preventing the rebels from attacking inhabited points; however, as always, significant results can only be obtained by an offensive. Thus it was necessary to root out from the inhabited points the insurrectional organizations engaged in violence, indoctrination, and serving as support for the bands operating outside the masses. It was also necessary to

destroy these bands. This mission could be accomplished by the quadrillage forces only if the insurrectional forces were few and numerically weak.

Thus, the action of the quadrillage forces backs up that of the intervention forces. On one hand, it becomes effective only in regions in which the presence of insurrectionists has been "trimmed." On the other hand, it contributes to large offensive operations by driving back the bands from inhabited zones (and thus restricting them to desert regions), by providing both the military framework in which the large operations are articulated and the requisite information regarding insurrectional deployments.

Finally, the quadrillage is one of the media for influencing the population, whether to social action, "psychological action," or active military involvement on the side of the counterinsurrectional forces (in particular, the implementation of the self-protection system is incumbent upon the quadrillage forces).

The number of missions, their interaction, the need for proper assessment of both the military and psychological ratios of strength in the zone to be controlled make quadrillage a difficult art. Whereas it is easy -- but disastrous -- to keep one's troops buried behind fortifications or barbed wire, it is more difficult to act within the population and to choose the right moment and proper measure among the wide range available to the officers in charge of the quadrillage.

The personality of the "sector commander," his knowledge of the population he is in charge of, the imaginativeness of his intellect, and his personal prestige make

him the keystone of the system. He must be simultaneously a military man, policeman, judge, administrator, and political leader. Experience has shown marked variations in the results obtained, depending upon the personality of the officers in charge of the quadrillage. General Challe attached particular importance to the selection of young, dynamic leaders, chosen less for their conventional military qualities than for their aptitude to adjust to complex political-military situations, their sense of human contact, and their will to succeed.

In fact, handled in a dynamic and creative manner, quadrillage makes possible satisfactory results. The most frequently used technique in Algeria consisted of progressive effort and its adaptation to the degree of corruption of the zone to be controlled.

In very corrupt zones (high insurrectional density with a strong hold on the population), the quadrillage begins by being static and militarily defensive. It aims at the defense of fixed points and communication lines until the intervention forces in charge of the offensive against the large insurrectional organizations have been able to clear the region sufficiently.

In the moderately corrupt zones, the quadrillage becomes dynamic and progressively offensive. In a first stage, its main aspect is always defensive but the matter is now one of securing the protection of the population. Moreover, milestones are established to allow offensive measures. Troops are deployed within the population, build defense systems at inhabited points, control its access roads, learn to know the population, and watch its

movements (the census technique, in particular, by issuing new identification papers to detect the elements foreign to the masses).

At a second stage, the contact of the troops with the population should allow them to influence it. The military deployment and its successes (even if they are only defensive) make it possible to begin making the population aware that supporting the rebels is not compulsory and that resorting to violence is not easy. At the same time, the social and economic effect of the soldiers, and their human feelings allow the population to foresee that involvement on their side can be possible.

Once the bases of the structure have thus been laid, contact with the inhabitants established and confidence partially restored, the third stage can begin, the offensive against small insurrectional organizations. The first branch of the offensive is directed against organizations implanted within the inhabited points: political organizations, propaganda cells, supporting networks, and terrorist groups. Units specializing in counter-espionage in an insurrectional milieu (in Algeria, the D.O.P.: Operational Detachments of Protection) question suspects in such a manner as to obtain maximum information from them, and recruit agents whose protection they secure by resorting to strict secrecy. The command makes full use of its contacts with the population (regular private conversations with a large number of inhabitants create personal ties of confidence and induce denunciations that will not endanger their authors). Simultaneously, the second branch of the offensive attacks the small military

groups of the insurrection which are scattered over the countryside. Operations are initiated in locations that can serve as shelters, and operations based on complete factual knowledge are set up according to information from channels established within the population.

At this stage, two directions make it possible to amplify the scope of the offensive against the small insurrectional organizations. On one hand, influence on the population becomes more widespread. The military successes make it possible to increase the dissuasive influence on the inhabitants: the insurrection must appear henceforth as optional and impossible. At the same time, the involvement on the side of the counterinsurrectional forces must seem possible (in particular, local auxiliaries can be recruited). On the other hand, the intervention forces, which are better informed and guided by the quadrillage forces, can carry out a more systematic "cleaning" of the region and proceed more easily to the destruction of the insurrectional forces driven back from the inhabited zones.

When points or zones are thus rid of the insurrectional influence, the population itself can then be engaged militarily against the insurrection so that it can ensure by itself both the defense of the inhabited points and the offensive against the insurrectional organizations. There again a progressive sequence is sought. At the outset, volunteers participate in the defense of an inhabited point before the latter can be set up as a self-protecting system. Likewise, mercenaries are integrated in the assault forces before being set up as independent commandos who must spread. Two mistakes must be avoided in this

development: the first is to give weapons and responsibilities to a population or to volunteers who are insufficiently committed to the side of the counterinsurrectional forces. (The commitment must have become progressively irreversible so that the volunteers and the entire population are not tempted, under pressure of the insurrection, to redeem themselves by changing sides once again). In the opposite direction, the second mistake consists of refusing weapons to men and to a population seriously involved, in which case they become a choice target for the rebels who can, by slaughtering them, dissuade others from following their example.

Moreover, the temporal progression is supplemented by a special progression. As they do not have sufficient men, the "sector commanders" prefer to direct their main efforts toward limited zones which they believe would provide valuable examples. From the successes obtained in these zones, they extend their action to the entire sector, just as the pacification of pilot sectors must spread into larger regions. Whereas in the large offensive operations, the French General Staff assumed that assigning priority to attacking the most corrupt zones (and thus progressing from the more corrupt to the less corrupt) would yield positive results, the officers in charge of the quadrillage preferred to start with zones moderately infiltrated by the insurrection (thus progressing from the less corrupt to the more corrupt while simultaneously cleaning up the easy zones in a timely fashion). This different choice results from the fact that the quadrillage is a more difficult art than the

large offensive operation. But it seeks the same end: to obtain results that will have the greatest influence on the morale of the fighting man and the population.

In addition, it is obvious that the following different phases are not actually so sharply distinguishable, and are not regularly linked to each other (they may even overlap): 1) static quadrillage for defense of military targets plus large offensive operations against the insurrectional military organizations, 2) dynamic quadrillage for population protection plus influence on the population, 3) military offensive quadrillage by the neutralization of support organizations and by the destruction of small military insurrectional organizations (plus large offensive operations plus influence on the population), and 4) quadrillage of the political-military offensive for the purpose of ultimate self-protection and offensive involvement of the population. As a matter of fact, on the level of quadrillage where contact with the population is made, the interaction between the morale of the inhabitants and the military operations is particularly marked. Every military (or police) success must be immediately exploited with respect to the population. Every modification of its state of mind can allow a military (or police) success.

Here we must say a word about the so-called technique of "regrouping" presented by certain theoreticians as the natural complement to the self-protection system.

In Algeria, "regrouping" of the population involved more than one million Moslems, but this overall figure actually reveals quite different facts.

In certain cases, it might occur that the normal development of the quadrillage process that we have described above was hindered by the configuration of the terrain, which made it difficult to protect the inhabited points (in Algeria certain mountains are very densely occupied) and completely impossible to achieve their self-protection by inhabitants whose military qualities could never equal those of professional fighting men. Regrouping in points that would be easy to defend (in particular, in valleys) could then appear as a necessary condition for completing the "offensive quadrillage." It is only in its final stage, at the time of the involvement of the population, that regrouping in self-defense was grafted onto the destruction of small insurrectional organizations and "cleaning" by the large offensive operations.

On the contrary, in contrast to the experts considering regrouping as a finishing touch in setting up self-defense, certain specialists preached regrouping as a starting point of offensive quadrillage in a highly corrupt zone. A very hilly terrain, high population density, the extensive presence of insurrectionists, and a substantial hold on the population made troop implantation in the population, in their view, inoperative as long as the latter had not been regrouped. According to this view, therefore, regrouping must take place immediately after the first large offensive operations of "trimming" the region, and must serve as a stepping stone to the offensive against the small insurrectional organizations and to regaining control of the population.

Actually, two radically different concepts of counter-insurgency lie behind this disagreement about timing. The first is quite aware that regrouping is a military palliative; (even if the population accepts and requests it, the fact remains that the counterinsurrectional offensive did not completely attain its objectives since it could not completely cleanse the region). The second concept has more complex motivations. On one hand, it approaches the counterinsurrectional problem with the simple views that are peculiar to conventional military operations: "Since the insurrection must be cut off from the population, let us isolate it; since the insurrectional organizations must be driven back from the inhabited zones, let us depopulate them." On the other hand, it places great confidence in the possibilities of controlling the population and manipulating its feelings.

The Algerian territory having been hermetically cut off from the "external sanctuaries" in adjacent countries and hemmed in by the links of the offensive quadrillage, General Challe launched the "general reserves" that he had formed to oppose the large bands of the FLN. In February and March of 1959, Operation "Couronne" proceeded to clean up the Ouarsenis and Tlemcen mountains in Oran province. From April 18 to June 15, Operation "Courroie" attacked the Algiers county bands. From July 8 to July 19, "Extincelle" cleared the Hodna mountains which connect the Aures and Kabylia mountain groups. After July 22, the latter group of mountains became the target of Operation "Jumelles." In September of 1959, the "Pierres Precieuses" operations -- "Tourquoise,"

"Emeraude," "Rubis" -- proceeded to clean up the north Constantine province group of mountains. And in March of 1960, "Matraque" returned to the Ouarsenis and after the departure of General Challe, his successor, General Crapin, launched "Prometheus I" and "Prometheus II" in the Atlas mountains.

The tactical and technological procedures underlying these operations are now quite well known. Bands were "held" in a zone surrounded by a complete seal and destroyed by special assault troops injected into the net thus created. The systematic recourse to helicopters to bring the units on site, the use of aerial observation to detect the band movements, the abundance of radio equipment (every participant was able to follow the progression of the fighting), the resort to crack troops using ultra-rapid combat rhythm (in particular, in order to achieve before nightfall the destruction of the enemy elements), and a command deploying its headquarters in the combat zone and capable of instantly modifying its system -- all provided the necessary mobility. On the other hand, the recourse to the sector troops (reinforced at the last moment by elements of intervention forces) made possible a rapid and discrete implementation of a tight and deep seal.

The extremely rapid large offensive operations of the "Challe Plan" were also different from the slow and heavy standard "raking" operations in that they were totally devoid of rigidity. Launched sometimes a priori on irregular terrain which seemed propitious to the sheltering of the guerrillas, they also sought surprise

effects by the ultra-rapid exploitation of information obtained from prisoners or from defectors, by aerial observation, by "sector commanders" knowing their region thoroughly, by interception of enemy radio messages, and by "nomadization" of specialized units secretly infiltrated in corrupt zones to detect any undesirable presence.

In addition to these technical innovations, the second original aspect of the large offensive operations of the Challe Plan lay in their integration into the general strategic concept that we have described at length. The advanced technique of the intervention forces is not a simple demonstration of military mastery in order to "break some fellaghas" as a compensation for the hardships incurred in "breaking some Viets." On the one hand, the effectiveness of the large operations was available to the officers in charge of the quadrillage; it was the local command that requested them and supervised them. On the other hand, it aimed at impressing, as we know, both the population and the fighting men. In addition to the tactical conclusions concerning the brutality of the combat methods, the refusal to take prisoners, the absence of exactions, the policy of sympathy of the troops towards the population, this last imperative leads to two kinds of decisions on the strategic level.

General Challe laid down, as a first principle, that an operation should be discontinued only when it had achieved the total destruction of the insurrectional organizations. The "Etincelle" operation in the Hodna mountains lasted 15 days (the necessary length of time to destroy the bands controlling the ridges connecting the

Kabylia mountains to the Aures mountains), the "Couronne" operation to clean up the Oran mountains lasted two months, and the "Jumelles" operation, which attacked the fief of the FLN insurrection in the tortuous Kabylia mountains, lasted more than eight months.

Unfortunately, if the relief, the insurrectional density, and the state of mind of the population reduce the effectiveness of the offensive operation, the command finds itself facing a serious dilemma. To immobilize one's intervention forces for too long prevents the cleanup of other contaminated zones; the morale of the rebels implanted there is boosted while the population as a whole may be impressed by the strength of an insurrection which ties up for such a long time the best troops of the counterinsurgents.

Thus we arrive at a second conclusion to be added to the first principle of operation length, calculated according to the time necessary to totally destroy the local insurrectional organizations: the total destruction of the insurrectional forces will not be performed at one time. According to General Challe, the "steam roller" of the general reserves had to pass over Algeria as many times as was necessary. Thus after the first west-to-east passage in 1959, General Challe anticipated a "second passage" in 1960.

Added to this basic strategic conclusion is the imperative to give maximum relief to the effort required of the intervention forces. On one hand, an original formula of light "commandos" which was tested in Algeria made it possible to continue, with a minimum of forces,

the destruction of the insurrectional forces in zones already trimmed down. On the other hand, the successes obtained in the offensive quadrillage area must free men -- in particular by setting up the population in self-defense -- allowing for the organization of intervention forces belonging to all the levels of the local command, and the subsequent use of the general reserves in several contaminated zones. Moreover, it is this wish to release local forces that induced the intervention specialists to recommend the "regrouping" technique while the quadrillage experts preferred by far its slow progress according to the scheme we described.

Actually, we must note that the large offensive operations of the Challe Plan which are most frequently presented as a single entity really include different kinds of operations which differ markedly in inspiration. Most certainly, the unity originates from General Challe's desire to proceed to the cleanup of the insurrectional shelter zones where French troops either did not appear at all before 1958, or engaged in a defensive quadrillage of military targets or in large conventional operations of spectacular but quick, episodic, and ineffective raking. Of course, to clean out these shelter zones where, owing to this deficiency, the insurrection concentrated its bands and conducted an in-depth action on the population, the French army had always counted on the same basic operational methods, but they gave varying results, in the field. In the Hodna ("Etincelle") or Ouarsenis ("Couronne") mountains the operations achieved the closest to tactical perfection as the bands were isolated in

mountains of few inhabitants and small area. In Algiers province ("Courroie") the offensive operations were best integrated in the dynamic quadrillage as the latter successfully covered the suburbs of the Algerian Capital.

The cleanup of Kabylia ("Jumelles") was a very different type of operation. These very tortuous, highly populated and spread out mountains had become a fief of the insurrection which had, with impunity, combined there a diffuse military presence with an in-depth political influence on the population. This time it was not a matter of rapid unfolding of military mastery in a little-populated shelter zone, nor of a subtle combination with an effective quadrillage hemming in the population. After an initial trimming of the region General Challe (who himself had settled in the region at the "Artois Headquarters") did decide to go from the military defense quadrillage to the population protection quadrillage. However, the desire to make the campaign as effective as possible, the lack of forces specialized in quadrillage led him -- in view of the density of the insurrectional presence and the extent of its hold on the population -- to have the quadrillage carried out by the intervention forces themselves and to use the "regrouping" technique. As a result, the slow progression of the quadrillage was given up in favor of quicker and more brutal methods of control over the population.

The empiricism of the French operational methods, their flexibility, and their adaptation to local conditions thus added to the lack of a truly national doctrine resulted in differences whose consequences we will carefully analyze at the level of counterinsurrectional effectiveness.

Aside from the large-scale offensives and the quadrillage operations, the French drive against the insurrection put into effect other methods generally classed as "unconventional warfare." The most spectacular procedure was based on the use of specialized commando troops, organized to match as closely as possible the characteristics of the guerrilla bands. Trained so that they could live like guerrillas, and often made up of ex-fellaghas who had been won over to the French side, these commando groups instigated operational tactics patterned after those of the insurgents. They behaved like "nomads," moving constantly with the maximum of speed and discretion, getting used to the art of ambushing, getting to know the terrain and the people, and capable of splitting up into small autonomous groups. The counter-insurgent commandos were thus making use of the insurgents' own weapons: mobility, fluidity, and surprise. They could either destroy the insurgent bands themselves, or they could come to grips with them and detain them until the arrival of the intervention forces, or they could simply signal their location.

The specialized commando forces became, in Algeria, the indispensable support of the large-scale offensive operations. Their part in the destruction of the insurgent bands was twofold. During the phase of mopping-up a contaminated area, they served as reconnaissance agents for the intervention forces. After the conclusion of a clean-up operation, they performed a "consolidation" mission by hindering, in cooperation with the quadrillage forces, the regrouping of the previously destroyed insurgent bands.

This pattern was so successful that General Challe pushed vigorously for the formation and training of counterinsurgency commandos. By 31 December 1960, thirteen "pursuit commando" groups were part of the strategic reserves under the jurisdiction of the Commander-in-Chief (made up of 60-80 men, they could be split into small groups, down to teams of four). To these basic reserve forces should be added the local commando units, made up principally of Moslems who were ex-fellaghas, incorporated into special units such as the famous "George Commando," or of harkis like Si Cherif or Bechaga Boualem. This experiment showed, in fact, that integration of former insurgents into the pursuit commando groups was the best way to use them: partly because their experience in guerrilla warfare was especially valuable, and also because the kind of life offered them involved a minimum of dislocation and gave them most of the primary satisfactions that the insurgency had provided (a taste of freedom, the excitement of the chase, major raids, a feeling of comradeship, etc.). The shock of the shift in allegiance created, finally, a movement so irreversible that the risks of revolt were greatly reduced (at least as long as there was no large-scale shifting of power between the insurgents and the counterinsurgents). If the essential factor was, in this case, one of command, the use of voluntary counterinsurgent commandos depended principally on the degree of involvement by the local population on the side of the counterinsurgents, and this was more a political than a military problem.

The second operational procedure put into systematic practice during the Algerian war was aimed less at the

destruction of the military bands than at the collapse of their support organizations, their politico-administrative apparatus, and their terrorist network. The experiment showed, in fact, that neither police nor conventional military forces were well adapted to such missions. During the period of insurgency, the police quickly found themselves outflanked. Inadequate in the villages and small settlements, they became useless even in the towns where they were strongly established. The number of rebel actions was too large for any detailed inquiries to be made after each crime or misdemeanor. The use by the insurgents of underground tactics rendered useless orthodox methods of criminal investigation, which were intended to uncover and convict individual criminals, not to disrupt secret networks and organizations. Respect for the legal process caused a loss of time (if one wished to try and judge the crime according to the rules) and often led to inappropriate penalties. The insurgent atmosphere forced the police to withdraw into their headquarters, where they were isolated both from the populace and from their channels of information. The Army was no better equipped: its Second Bureau was set up for "tactical" intelligence research, working on hostile armed forces by means of surveillance, interrogation of prisoners and civilians, etc.

One of the results of the quadrillage was to remedy this structural defect of the orthodox intelligence services. By infiltrating the population and winning their confidence, the armed forces secured information on the insurgent organizations. But they encountered certain difficulties: in the first place, in the area of underground activity, the advantage was on the side of the

networks, whose movements could be entirely covert, while the armed forces' actions were more or less overt. In the second place, the repressive potential of the quadrillage forces was limited in regard to parapolitical organizations. The respect for legality frequently ended in rendering ineffectual any sanctions against these organizations, since a crime is not only difficult to prove, but even more difficult to condemn by means of conventional tribunals. On the other hand, recourse to violence and illegality, if it took place openly, would be likely to arouse antagonistic feelings among the civilian population and might tend to drive them into the arms of the insurgents.

It was precisely to remedy this double problem that the French Army, drawing on its Indochinese experience, perfected its system of using specialized commando troops for the detection and destruction of insurgent organizations which had infiltrated the population. These commandos, placed by the special services under the jurisdiction of the local military commanders (in Algeria they were called "Detachements Operationels de Protection") had as their primary mission the adaptation of counterespionage methods of search and pursuit to the necessities of counterinsurgency actions. Working covertly themselves, they had to assure maximum protection to their agents in the insurgent area. By using illegal methods, they could put into effect the most efficient (if not the most ethical) means to secure as rapidly as possible the necessary information during the interrogations, and also could oblige the arrested insurgents to work as "double" agents. As far as destroying insurgent organizations was

concerned, the underground nature and the illegality of the "D.O.P." made it possible to circumvent administrative and judicial procedure in order to proceed (without hurting the feelings of the population) with the elimination, in secret, of some of the insurgent leaders.

In theory, this plan allowed the quadrillage forces engaged against the insurrectionist organizations (the terrorist networks, the support networks, and the political indoctrination system) to have the same support they were given by the intervention forces and the pursuit commandos in their offensive against the paramilitary bands, detection and destruction. In practice, meanwhile, the methods employed limited their efficiency. A democratic country repudiates this type of action. Moreover, the nature of covert actions does not allow their multiplication on a large scale. Technically equipped to be, in their area, as effective "hunters" as were the intervention forces, the "D.O.P." did not deliver results on the same scale. Their plan concentrated primarily on the "detection" aspect of the double mission, with the destruction aspect remaining subject to the difficulties posed by the repression of parapolitical organizations in a legal context.

If the pursuit commandos and the "D.O.P." constituted, each according to their specialty, two permanent factors of the French offensive against the FLN, the other aspects of "nonconventional warfare" played only an episodic role, often unsympathetic with the hopes which they had aroused. The French special services were concentrating on various types of destructive operations aimed against the insurgent organizations.

The most successful operation was that called the "bleuite,"* directed against the most important area of the FLN, the "wilaya" 3 of Kabylia. Surprised by the extent of the success of the French offensive, the head of the area, Amirouche, committed an error of judgment which was normal for a man who had known only success until that time. He attributed the French victories not to the new counterinsurgency methods which we have described, but to dissension among his own troops. The French forces then decided to take advantage of this confusion of cause and effect. Instead of using the "sources" which they had reserved for repressive purposes, they carried out a large-scale "poisoning" operation, infiltrating the FLN with false documents, and furnishing a number of details about a so-called treason network in the midst of the Kabylia troops. The reaction of Amirouche to this situation was magnified as much by his cruel and suspicious nature as by the difficult living conditions of a guerrilla leader: he carried out a purge which turned upside down the entire structure of his area. Unbelievable avowals, obtained by torture, confirmed the false indications invented by the French services. Once set in motion, this process snowballed. The "wilaya" 3 lost in this manner half of its men, but the loss to its combat potential could be measured by more than mere numbers. The sapping of its energy, the establishment of a sense of general suspicion verging on a climate of civil war, the obsessive fear of treason -- all had a persistent

*The past participle "bleuite" (blued) derived from the name of the uniform "bleus de chauffe" (fire blues).

effect on the fighters, who were also subjected to harassment by the French troops.

If the "bleuite" operation reinforced the convictions of those specialists who believed in the primacy of "non-conventional" operations over the orthodox operations (losses of the "wilaya" 3 due to the "bleuite" were greater than those it suffered in combat during the same period), other actions carried out by the French special services had, nevertheless, considerable less success.

From 1957 to 1962, an entire series of operations attempted to put into practice a concept called the "maquis anti-maquis," which had been experimented with in Indochina (where, in two years, 50,000 anti-Viet Minh guerrilla fighters had been organized and equipped in the mountain regions of Tonkin and Laos).

The first operation consisted of establishing a maquis which would use the same methods of guerrilla warfare, the same revolutionary ideology of the FLN with the hope of channeling the forces of insurgency and then turning them against the FLN. Such was the purpose of "force K," the code name for its leader, Kobus. It was set up in 1958 but rapidly phased out. The new maquis did a poor job of developing their strength and were rather quickly neutralized by the FLN.

The second plan was based on the creation of insurgent movements which differed in ideology from the FLN but could be favorably regarded by the Moslem population; for example, the F.A.A.D. (Algerian Democratic Action Front) which wanted an armed struggle for independence, but would accept an end to the conflict at the price of

an accommodation with France. Even though constructed around a group of politicians who benefited from well-organized networks, even though launched at a time when "Algeria for Algerians" appeared popular among the Moslems, the F.A.A.D. was nevertheless a complete failure. Its instigators decided that it had not been able to overcome the handicap of starting too late; its appearance was too coincidental with the policy change in the French government. Furthermore, the beginning of the Evian negotiations seemed to indicate that any solution to the Algerian conflict would be handled by the FLN. If the F.A.A.D. had been launched during an earlier stage of the military offensive, it would have stood a better chance of becoming an authentic insurgent organization.

The third plan consisted in essence of giving support to already-established insurgent organizations that would proclaim the insurgents' ideology but come into opposition with the FLN for reasons of personal rivalry. Such was the case of the MNA (The Algerian Nationalist Movement) led by the nationalist Messali Hadj. Equipped with a prestigious background (from 1937 to 1947, Messali was the single representative of revolutionary nationalism) and having at his disposal numerous militant adherents in France and Algeria, Messali Hadj had been given momentum by the "young Turks" in his own organization, who had unleashed the armed uprising of 1 November 1954. Patterning his movements after those of the FLN, forming his own terrorist networks in the large French urban areas, organizing maquis groups in south Algeria, Messali refused nevertheless to recognize the influence of his former

subordinates. A fierce combat then took place between the two movements, the FLN doing everything to eliminate its counterpart, since the dogma of the consecrated and obligatory nature of an insurgency does not allow such a dichotomy. The influence of the FLN, its greater dynamism, its superior identification with the positive aspirations and the negative feelings of the Moslem population, gave it the advantage. The massacre of the Messaliste village of Melouza (300 dead) in 1957 created favorable conditions for the conclusion of a modus vivendi between the French army and the head of the Messaliste maquis of Southern Algeria, Bellounis.

The Bellounis experience brought several gains. Taking advantage of French neutrality, Bellounis proceeded to purge the area which he controlled of all FLN's. The effects of this operation lasted for nearly four years -- until the end of hostilities. But two events marred this outcome. In the first place, Bellounis had never been able to extend his influence outside his original territory: French support permitted him to repel the FLN offensive, but not to proceed himself on a counteroffensive. Secondly, once his position was consolidated, the Messaliste leader, otherwise relatively moderate, embarked on a policy of violence against France. Without directly attacking the French forces, he devoted himself to attacks against French property, at which juncture the French command decided to eliminate him. Even though this operation was carried out easily, the Bellounists still did not pass back under French control. True, it did not constitute a menace, but even so it remained a kind of

'no man's land' between the FLN and France. Likewise, in metropolitan France, the covert support of the MNA networks by the French police aided their defensive action against the FLN networks without allowing them to make any advances on the ground. Here again, the consolidation of the MNA positions allowed them to increase their insurrectional activities, which, however, did not pose a serious political problem since, in their urban context, these activities were primarily directed against the Moslem masses (collection of funds, propaganda, etc.)

When France later negotiated with the FLN, the instigators of the Bellounis operations and the MNA expressed regret that they had not sufficiently "pumped up" their followers. In their eyes, the limitations imposed on Bellounis had not allowed him to appear as an authentic insurgent. Others mentioned that, to the contrary, Bellounis had perfectly fulfilled his mission: he had stopped the FLN offensive in a given sector at low cost, and it had been easy to eliminate him when he had been revealed as an insurrectionary force replacing the FLN.

This last statement may well sum up the way the French services turned these experiences to account. If the creation of pseudoinsurrectionary organizations had not in fact caused any damage to the FLN insurrection, the support of dissident organizations had provided a limited defensive value. In some isolated cases, the growth of the orthodox insurrection had been checked, but this formula had not enabled the delivery of offensive blows against the insurrectionist organizations.

The value of the old adage "divide and rule" remains, therefore, after these experiences, open to debate. One can only guess what might have happened if the MNA had been "pumped up" as a replacement insurrectionary force. Would not the MNA have been constrained to bid higher (as much in combat as in negotiations)? Even at this price, would the operation have been feasible? Would not the call for the support of the counterinsurrection have been proof of MNA's irremediable decadence? To the contrary, would not support given to an insurrectionary movement by the counterinsurgent have been in itself a manifestation of weakness? Certainly, on the strictly military level, over the short term and in a specified zone, it is easy to destroy a dissident organization once one has stopped the orthodox insurrection, but what effect does such an action exercise on the morale of the population over the long term and over the whole population? Will not the most lasting results be obtained if one addresses oneself directly to the destruction of all forms of insurrectionary opposition by eschewing the intermediate phase of supporting dissidents who would only, in the final analysis, be makeshift?

It is typical of the empirical and fragmentary character of the French counterinsurgency in Algeria that such questions were not raised before carrying out operations, so intense were the desires of the command not to let any opportunity escape and the ardor of the services to apply solutions within the framework of their respective specialties. Over and above these factors, the infatuation of certain French military men for certain

postulates of their "theory" of "revolutionary war" led them to consider nearly all the formulas derived from the fighting methods of the insurgency as automatically productive. The solution of "maquis-antimaquis" thus acquired an almost talismanic virtue. As it had succeeded in Indochina, it seemed applicable in Algeria without regard to the profound difference in situation. The anti-Viet Minh maquis of Laos were successful because the population of the high plateaus didn't like what they considered to be a foreign insurrection. In Algeria, by contrast, the negative sentiments of the population were directed against French power and could, therefore, function only in insurrectionary maquis, even, one could say, only in the most insurrectionary maquis. (By contrast, in regions where the traditional sentiments of the Moslem tribes were strong, the weakness of the FLN infiltration did not necessitate -- in contrast to Indochina -- the formation of anti-FLN maquis but allowed the creation of self-defense groups, of harkis, and of pursuit commandos.)

Similarly, on the more general level, the "unconventional" character of an operation did not lead automatically to success. Pursuit commandos were useful, not because they had recourse to guerrilla techniques but because, in Algeria, they were perfectly adapted to the nature of the FLN adversary and to the French military response of which they were only one element. Against larger bands and without the support of intervention and quadrillage forces, the pursuit commandos would have suffered the same fate as in Indochina where their employment had become impossible because the more the Viet Minh grew in strength the more the hunter found himself the hunted.

Intervention forces, quadrillage, specialized commandos: the combination of these three operational methods were employed in Algeria not only against guerrilla bands in inhabited countryside. The French Army estimated that their use permitted the destruction of the terrorist urban networks of the FLN during "the battle of Algiers" in 1957. A simple offensive of "blind" terrorism randomly directed against Europeans was stopped in three weeks and in so radical a manner that this form of guerrilla action (which, with effectives limited to 500 men, had been able to overturn the capital of Algeria) was not attempted again until the end of the conflict.

The intervention force was, in fact, the 10th Parachute Division, which took control of the Moslem city. It was this division that sealed off the city, undertook large control operations and raids against the different command posts of the networks. The "quadrillage" was confined to specialized units, such as the 9th Zouave regiment that had acquired a perfect knowledge of the Moslem Casbah. It was this quarter of the city that, because of its dense population and labyrinthian ways, had become a veritable "inside sanctuary" of the insurrection. Finally, specialized commandos were organized by intelligence officers of the 10th Parachute Division, formed at the beginning from French parachuters. They drew into their ranks more and more Moslems and, above all, former terrorists, who, under the name of "Fire Blues,"* became the obsessive fear of the FLN.

* See above p. 60.

If in big operations against guerrilla bands the destruction phase poses the most difficult problems, it is intelligence that is needed for neutralizing terrorist networks. Swiftmess in the exploitation of intelligence, efficiency in carrying through an operation against a terrorist CP, knowledge of the area and of the population are certainly essential. These are qualities that are generally wanting in standard police forces, that characteristically intervene with slowness, heaviness, and with respect for legal rules. But they are also qualities that run the risk of remaining inoperative if the intervention forces are not led by commandos sufficiently skilled and trained in the detection of insurrectionary networks. These latter, in fact, have resources available to them that guerrilla bands lack: they are few in number, are submerged in the population, and, applying the rules of underground movement, run only a few risks when they strike blindly.

Under these conditions the specialized commandos were not an ancillary force during the "battle of Algiers," but the key to the offensive. In time, their mission became more limited and more defined: to break the barrier of the underground movement protecting the terrorist networks. Here again, the police had shown themselves powerless. Equipped to discover and bring to trial isolated criminals, they were not a match for organized professionals.

In the final analysis, if knowledge of the terrain and of the population by the quadrillage forces, and speediness and effectiveness of the intervention forces constitute elements of the success obtained during the

"battle of Algiers," the dismantlement of the "bomb networks" of the FLN was above all due to the methods employed by the commandos responsible for intelligence. These were the ones who, following every lead that fell into their hands (a suspect arrested during a control operation, a clue obtained by the criminal police leading to an individual), worked their way into the terrorist networks. Now, not many methods exist to force a suspect to furnish the information he is withholding. Thus torture became the principal weapon of the "battle of Algiers." It is not appropriate for us to discuss here the moral question of the means used to get information. Its defenders asserted that it was not practiced in a sadistic manner, but with purely utilitarian spirit; that it permitted them to save human lives; that it constituted a form of risk appropriate to the type of combat conducted by the terrorist, etc. Indeed, it must be understood that it permitted the attainment of impressive results in dismantling the insurrectionary networks.

Conversely, it is the conjunction of successes thus obtained and the impression of power given by the employment of the 10th Parachute Division that explains the number of Muslim defectors, the "Fire Blues." In counter-insurgency matters, success calls for success.

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10. ABSTRACT An analysis of the French military and political offensive against the National Liberation Front (FLN), Algeria, 1958-1960. General de Gaulle's strategy against the Moslem insurgents had a two-fold purpose. Its military goal was first to neutralize and then to destroy the insurrectional apparatus. Its political goal was to gain support of the Moslem populace through economic, political, and social rehabilitation. Contrary to some opinions, the French Army had not devised a new and radical theory of fighting revolutionary wars. The unconventional tactics that were used so successfully were often due to on-the-spot improvisations and to lessons learned in Indochina. The French command wanted not just to neutralize the populace but also to win its support. However, methods swift and terrible enough to demoralize the enemy risked driving the civilians further into the guerrilla camp. The French offensive in Algeria--its successes and its limitations--is still much debated in France. (FOUO)		11. KEY WORDS Counterinsurgency and insurgency Algeria France Tactical warfare	

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